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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000882

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [NG](#)
SUBJECT: NIGER: NEW PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON THE OPPOSITION

REF: A. NIAMEY 864 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. NIAMEY 854

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Classified By: Ambassador Bernadette M. Allen, Reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On November 2, Ambassador Allen (Embassy PolOff note taker) met Government of Niger (GON) Prime Minister (PM) Ali Badjo Gamatie at the PM's office. Over the past few months, the GON has made concerted efforts to silence its critics and to marginalize the opposition. Some GON members and "Tazarce" supporters have even labeled opposition members as acting "unpatriotic." (Note: Tazarce in Hausa language means "let it continue." End note.) When asked about the "unpatriotic" labeling, PM Gamatie argued that "certain oppositon members are plotting against the Republic of Niger (RON). He added that the GON has proof of the plotting and alleged that opposition leaders receive financial support from outsiders, notably from Nigeria, who funnel funds through questionable foreign bank accounts. (Note: This is the final of three cables detailing the meeting between the Ambassador and the new GON Prime Minister. End note.) End summary.

Opposition Members Responsible for ECOWAS Sanctions with Outside Support

[1](#)2. (C) In the meetng with PM Gamatie, the Ambassador inquired why opposition members who have voiced objections to President Tandja's three-year extension of office are being labeled as "unpatriotic." The PM attributed the label to opposition members who are plotting against the RON. He added that the GON became aware some opposition members with close ties to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) parliamentarians, notably those representing Nigeria, secretly pressure the ECOWAS leadership to impose sanctions on Niger. Gamatie suggested that such actions are the reason behind allegations that certain opposition members are acting unpatriotic.

[1](#)3. (C) He accused opposition members of working with the Government of Nigeria and ECOWAS leadership to suspend the RON's ECOWAS membership. He added that the reason some GON opposition members have remained in Nigeria for an extended period is because of connections with Nigerian officials at the highest levels of office. He claimed that the ECOWAS decision of October 17, 2009, to suspend the RON had not been on the initial ECOWAS agenda, but was added only after

successful lobbying by opposition members. He stated that the GON knows that the ECOWAS is being pressured by the Governments of Nigeria and the United States to impose sanctions. Ambassador did not respond to the remark regarding USG pressure on ECOWAS, but stated that "the USG supports the ECOWAS position as noted in the USG's last issued declaration on the RON's political situation. The USG position has not changed."

International Arrest Warrants Against Opposition Members

¶4. (SBU) The GON has issued international arrest warrants against Democratic Convention and Social Party (CDS) President Mahamane Ousmane, Nigerien Party for Socialism and Democracy (PNDS) President Mahamadou Issoufou, and former GON Prime Minister Hama Amadou. (Note: No country has acted on the warrants. End note.) The GON has accused Ousmane, Issoufou and Amadou of holding embezzled government funds in foreign bank accounts, allegations the three have categorically denied. Gamatie acknowledged not becoming aware of the arrest warrant issued against Issoufou until he heard about it on the local news. He stated he immediately had the warrant rescinded.

Opposition Receives Financial Support from Outside

¶5. (C) Gamatie claimed that the GON has documentation to prove that opposition members have received funds from the Government of Nigeria, such as proof of wire transfers. He added that when he first learned of this that he immediately advised President Tandja to keep the information within the President's inner circle and not to go public with it.

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According to Gamatie, the Central Bank of Nigeria has wired over 4.2 million euro dollars to the bank accounts belonging to Issoufou and Ousmane; located in Switzerland and South Africa.

Ousmane Seeks to Retain ECOWAS Parliamentarian Role

¶6. (SBU) Gamatie stated that Ousmane is collaborating with the Government of Nigeria in order to protect his status in the ECOWAS parliament. He argued that if ECOWAS would have recognized the RON's October 20 legislative election results, Ousmane would have been replaced as Niger's representative to the ECOWAS parliament. Gamatie closed his remarks about Ousmane by opining that the primary reason Ousmane continues to court ECOWAS members is to ensure that his position in the ECOWAS parliament is secure. He complained that "ECOWAS is working as the armed forces of the opposition" and that Abuja is complicating the peace process.

ALLEN